

SB342

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Please oppose this tuition tax credit bill because it is nothing more than a scheme to give public dollars to private schools and to drain needed resources from our public schools. The fact is Montana public schools already rank in the bottom in the nation in per pupil expenditures for public schools. We simply cannot afford to create another publically funded school system.

These tuition tax credit schemes are nothing new and are based on a false premise that private schools provide a better education than public schools. In Montana, if you are sending your child to a private school because you want your kid to receive a superior education, you are sadly mistaken. The fact is you cannot beat a Montana public school with Montana certified public educators for your child's education. - it is not possible.

Vouchers and tuition tax credits weaken the separation of church and state that is so important to our form of government. Fundamentally, tuition tax credits are a way to use public policy to increase the money going to private schools. Tuition tax credits are an offshoot of the voucher concept. They are an attempt to drain critical dollars from public schools. While vouchers are a direct drain, tuition tax credits do the same, but through the tax code.

Even public school privatization supporters note the inherent link between vouchers and tuition tax credits. As Andy LeFevre, head of the education task force of the ultraconservative American Legislative Exchange Council puts it, with tuition tax credits "the end goal is the same as the voucher; it's just a different way to come about it."

This tuition tax credit program is also noteworthy for its lack of accountability. Unlike public school boards, private schools have no obligations to their communities and no oversight whatsoever on how they utilize their resources.

Just remember: Tuition tax credits have nothing to do with providing poor kids with educational choices. They are merely a way to use public policy to funnel money to private schools at the expense of adequately funding our public schools. Please oppose this bill and any other attempt to create a publically funded private school system.